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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the experiences of 31 preservice teacher-education students attending Mississippi State University (Meridian) during their practice teaching as recorded in their journals. This study was qualitative and quantitative. A quantitative aspect of the study was the examination of journal entries for semantic choices that reflected positive (more positive than negative), neutral (a balance), or negative (more negative than positive) experiences. On the basis of this evaluation, journals were divided into categories. Twenty-six journals were positive, five were neutral, and one was negative. The journals were also examined for evidence of reflective thinking. Four areas of concern were identified: (1) relationship with classroom teacher; (2) discipline; (3) personal teaching skills and abilities; and (4) students. Insight into the personal reactions of preservice student teachers toward their practice teaching experiences can help to evaluate the success of their educational program and to evaluate their potential classroom successes and failures. An appendix lists keywords and descriptors used in journal analyses. (Contains 30 references.) (Author/SLD)

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Examining Preservice Experiences Through Journals

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the experiences of 31 preservice, teacher-education students during their practice teaching as recorded in journals. The study was qualitative and quantitative. A quantitative aspect of the study was the examination of the journal entries for semantic choices which reflected positive (more positive than negative), neutral (a balance), or negative (more negative than positive) experiences. On the basis of this evaluation, the journals were divided into categories. Twenty-six journals were positive; five were neutral; and one was negative.

The journals were also examined for evidence of reflective thinking. Four areas of concern were identified: relationship with classroom teacher, discipline, personal teaching skills and abilities, and students.

Insight into the personal reactions of preservice student teachers toward their practice teaching experiences can help to evaluate the success of their educational program and to evaluate their potential classroom successes and failures.

Introduction

Examining Preservice Experiences Through Journals

Over the past three years, a long-term study of student teacher attitudes was conducted with the Spring semester student teachers at Mississippi State University-Meridian Campus. In the 1991 semester, it was decided to add a qualitative element to the study by incorporating student teachers' journals, kept during their 12-week student teaching requirement. The quantitative/qualitative study was reported by Benton and Richardson at the Mid-South Educational Research Association Annual Conference in Lexington, Kentucky, November, 1991. The journals which were examined for this study were coded to correlate with the Mississippi Student Teacher Attitude Inventory developed by Benton and Richardson. The numbers of positive/negative comments were used to categorize the journals. The comments were identified from a list of positive/negative words, phrases, or statements generated by student teacher, and the college supervisors and instructors at MSU-Meridian (See Appendix A).

In the Spring semester of 1992, it was decided that the study should be split into a qualitative study and a quantitative study which tied

the student teachers' attitudes to their experiences in a professional development school. The journals were kept for the qualitative study; but, in addition, the student teachers were asked to incorporate reflective thinking into their entries. They were asked to think about such classroom/instructional elements as discipline and behavior, students, personal teaching skills and abilities, their relationships with the classroom teacher. Tied to their thinking about themselves, their actions, and capabilities were evaluation of pedagogical practices taught in their courses and the practical application of these techniques.

The journals in this study were coded according to the key words and/or Descriptors for Analysis developed for use in the study reported in 1991. A further coding was completed according to the four categories identified for reflective thinking. This coding was recorded in a type of field log while the journals were being read for analysis by the researchers. A response narrative was also recorded in the field logs.

Review of Literature

Tesch (1990) started her description of software tools available to qualitative researchers with a history of qualitative research. She began with this comment, "Qualitative research is as old as social science itself:

well over a hundred years (p. 9)." She traced the impetus for qualitative research from Auguste Comte the founder of sociology in 1842, to Edward Taylor and anthropology in 1871, then to William James and psychology in 1878. Tesch (1990) remarked, "Except in sociology, where some scholars combined statistical and 'journalistic' methods, non-positivistic researchers soon found themselves in a pitiful minority (p. 10)." Tesch identified Edward Lee Thorndike's 1927 publication The Measurement of Intelligence as the beginning of a belief that any area considered by psychology could be measured. Lee Cronbach published Essentials of Psychological Testing in 1949, and Robert L. Thorndike published Educational Measurement in 1951. Fred Kerlinger published a classic book on methodology, Foundations of Behavioral Research in 1964. These volumes, according to Tesch (1990), settled the case for quantitative research. Tesch (1990) quoted Kerlinger's theories concerning unscientific research practices, one being the study of individuals rather than groups. Tesch (1990) surmised, "Despite the dominance of positivistic methods, researchers in small niches of all social sciences had quietly continued to conduct non-positivistic studies. They did not construct concepts and measured variables (p. 11)." The

course of scientific events turned with reform movements. Abraham Maslow published The Psychology of Science in 1966. He stated, "if there is any primary rule of science it is ... acceptance of the obligation to acknowledge and describe all of reality, all that exists, everything that is the case (p. 12)."

Tesch (1990) continued her historical summation with this remark, "For the largest gathering of psychologists in the world, the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, the existence of any type of qualitative research has not even been acknowledged yet in the subject index of the conference program (1988) (pp 13-14)."

Tesch (1990) named Carl Rogers as a strong influence on teachers when reforms of the 1960's prepared them for non-positivistic research. "Action research in education enjoyed a brief boom in the late 1950's and early 1960's and then succumbed to the concerted onslaught of criticism from the real scientist who found the idea of lay research detestable and the practices sloppy (Tesch, p. 14)." "The average educator, however, is much better acquainted with qualitative research than the average psychologist (Tesch, p. 14)." The next influential volume was written by Egon Guba; building on Denzin's phrase

'naturalistic inquiry', Guba published Toward a Methodology of Naturalistic Inquiry in Educational Evaluation in 1971. There followed a number of qualitative publications in education. "In 1986 a Special Interest Group for qualitative researchers formed at the AERA convention, immediately counting about 100 members ... In 1988 the first educational journal exclusively for qualitative research was launched: The Journal for Qualitative Studies in Education ... (Tesch p. 15)." Tesch's historical perspective leads to a definition and exposition of the methods employed by Ely and several other writers.

Naturalistic Inquiry

According to Ely (1991) there are several terms that possess the same meaning and intent when identifying research that is not quantitative; these include: naturalistic inquiry, ethnographic methodologies, qualitative research, and interpretative research. In the last few decades, the empirical world view which has dominated research has been challenged by a naturalistic paradigm. Those researchers who "work within this naturalistic paradigm operate from a set of axioms that hold realities to be multiple and shifting, that take for granted a simultaneous mutual shaping of knower and known, and that see all

inquiry, including the empirical, as being inevitably value-bound (Ely, p. 2)." The definitions of qualitative research are multiple, and it is probably better to use the characteristics of the method as a focus rather than select one of the many definitions as the ultimate definition.

Sherman and Webb (1988) produced this list of characteristics:

"1. Events can be understood adequately only if they are seen in context. Therefore, a qualitative researcher immerses her/himself in the setting.

2. The contexts of inquiry are not contrived; they are natural. Nothing is predefined or taken for granted.

3. Qualitative researchers want those who are studied to speak for themselves, to provide their perspectives in words and other actions. Therefore, qualitative research is an interactive process in which the persons studied teach the researcher about their lives.

4. Qualitative researchers attend to the experience as a whole, not as separate variables. The aim of qualitative research is to understand experience as unified.

5. Qualitative methods are appropriate to the above statements. There is no one general method.

6. For many qualitative researchers, the process entails appraisal about what was studied (pp. 5-8)."

Angul (In Ely, 1991) stated, "A key characteristic of naturalistic research is that questions for study evolve as one is studying. In fact, researchers rarely end up pursuing their original questions (p. 30)." She further identified the requirements needed at the beginning of a study as:

1. "An adequate self-awareness about how the field of study relates to one's own life;

2. A sound grasp of the research method one has chosen. This assumes a sound grasp of its literature, as well as research experiences and reflections thereon.

3. A broad grasp of the literature and practices in one's field of concern and the theories and assumptions associated with these ... (p. 30)."

Steinmetz (In Ely, 1991) pointed out areas and techniques for actually doing the field work of qualitative research. She included: "Choosing an observer's role, becoming an observer, conducting interviews, generating a log, beginning data analysis, striving for trustworthiness, and establishing a support group (p. 42)." She included

the idea that "The most essential means of gathering ethnographic data are looking and listening (p. 42)." Steinmetz (In Ely, 1991) designated 'participant observation' as an umbrella term as used by ethnographers; however, "interviewing, filming, and the analysis of written records (p. 42)" are joined into the tasks and strategies of participant observation. When one chooses a role, he/she must consider whether the role is to be active, privileged, or limited. "It follows, then, that even at our most unintrusive, we influence the very phenomenon we are studying. This is true of every research paradigm, quantitative and qualitative. For qualitative researchers the important issues are (1) that we participate as closely as possible in line with the needs of our study; (2) that we make ourselves as aware as possible of the ripples caused by our participation; (3) that we attempt to counter those ripples that might hinder the participant observer relationship and, hence, the study; and (4) that we describe in the report both what worked and what did not (p. 47)."

Steinmetz (In Ely, 1991) addressed the importance of logs or "field notes." She stated, "The log contains the data upon which the analysis is begun and carried forward (p. 69)." The log of the researcher contains

detail which provides insights for analysis, and it requires a great deal of description. The log format is generally evolved by the researcher as he/she develops workable procedures for observation. One aspect of maintaining a daily log is that the researcher can talk to her/himself about what is going on. Reality dictates that the log contains only what the researcher can record of what is seen and heard; the richness of the environment must be sacrificed for a slice of life. Logs are generally idiosyncratic in style and wording and furnish much less information than audiotaping and videotaping which can be used when permission is granted by those being studied. Analysis of the impressions and materials contained in the logs begins with creating categories. Steinmetz (In Ely, 1991) gave insight into this; she wrote, "creating categories triggers the construction of a conceptual scheme that suits the data. This scheme helps a researcher to ask questions, to compare across data, to change or drop categories, and to make a hierarchical order of them. At its most useful, the process of establishing categories is a very close, intense conversation between a researcher and the data that has implications for ongoing method, descriptive reporting, and theory building (p. 87)."

Friedman (In Ely, 1991) explored the role of emotion/feeling in analysis of research data. Her statement about familiar research settings applied to the present project. She said,

> Many people do ethnographic research in settings with which they are familiar ... familiarity with the subject at hand - the subculture, the jargon, the unwritten codes of behavior - may enable the researcher to delve deeply into the research without having to do all the preliminary work, such as learning a new lingo, becoming acquainted with the norms, and developing a level of comfort within the environment being studied (p. 124).

She continued, "However, there are certain issues that arise from familiarity with the subject of which the researcher must be aware. An important subtle issue concerns a researcher's presumption of understanding (p. 124)." "Another issue related to making the familiar unfamiliar concerns those deeply held values, expectations, biases that are being newly discovered by the researcher during the process of exploring the field (p. 125)." In her summation, Friedman (In Ely, 1991) explored the characteristics necessary to the person who would do qualitative research. One characteristic was flexibility, intellectual,

behavioral, and situational.

Other assets she felt necessary were the ability to maintain a sense of humor, to tolerate ambiguity, to empathize, and to tolerate strong emotions.

Garner (In Ely, 1991) discussed interpreting data, reducing, reorganizing and combining raw materials into a product of interest and economy. Ongoing analysis of data takes place while in the field but the final phase of data analysis takes place after the researcher has left the field and has time to reflect and then tackle the research questions. In the final data analysis, the research has been guided already by decisions made at earlier points. The research brings whatever understanding he/she has developed from previous work. No one else can make meaning out of the data collected except the researcher.

According to Garner, Lofland and Lofland (1984) developed a system called "thinking units" to serve as sorting files for data. Through thinking units the researcher can create the categories/subcategories necessary to bring organization to material. Establishing categories is time consuming and demanding, but categories provide meaning and link together to provide themes or statements of meaning. Garner (In

Ely, 1991) suggested methods for developing aspects of trustworthiness in data analysis. She suggested active confirmation of findings by involving peers in the roles of support group, by having peer checking (of findings), and by member (of the group being studied) checking. Finally, Garner addressed the writing of the research. According to Garner, (In Ely, 1991) finding a voice which tells the story with personal style adds to the creation of the narrative. The narrative may be developed in a number of ways:

1. "A case, or a story over time about a bounded system such as one person, one event, or one institution...

2. Composites which are similar to constructs/vigrettes but which describe findings that apply to a group of people rather than any one unique individual...

3. Descriptions of 'critical incidents' in the data...

4. Presentations of 'snapshots, moving pictures, and reruns'...

5. Studies in contrasts and contradictions... (pp 173-174)."

Garner (In Ely, et al, 1991) concluded her chapter on interpreting/analyzing data with the caution to revise the material to complete the story.

Ely, with Anzul, Friedman, Garner and Steinmetz (1991) established the recursive nature of qualitative research and explored the ethical issues of the process as well. These writers sought to authenticate the findings and process of qualitative research in terms of a naturalistic paradigm, as opposed to the traditional, empirical/positivist paradigm which views the world as a quantifiable entity.

Student Teaching Experiences

In examining student teachers' experiences, one must consider the events of the Student/Practice teaching requirement. A variety of approaches to this examination have been offered. Cruickshank (1990) surveyed studies that included models for research on teaching, the effective schools movement, and the limitations/advantages of research about the concerns of teacher educators. Pigge and Marso (1986) addressed changes in levels of anxiety, attitudes, concerns, and confidence among student teachers during their teacher training program. They found that student teachers who were elementary majors had more positive attitudes after their practice teaching. Purcell and Seiforth (1981) examined students' attitudes before and after their student teaching experiences and found that there were unexpected

changes in students' perceptions of the value of traditional education principles and practices. Kazelskis, Reeves-Kazelskis, and Kersh (1991) presented a study of student teachers' sense of teaching efficacy and teaching concerns; the researchers found that the student teaching experience contributed a positive influence on preservice teachers' Teaching Efficacy and Concerns and Personal Teaching Efficacy. Their student teachers evidenced less concern with task items after the student teaching experience. Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) found that student teachers' sense of personal efficacy improved and their sense of general teaching efficacy declined during the student teaching experience. Haynes and Others (1984) found that student teachers were generally positive about their student teaching experiences; however, higher-academic achieving students demonstrated less positive attitudes. Book, Byers, and Freeman's (1983) study reported that students expected that on the job training in the classroom and their supervised teaching experiences would give them the most valuable sources of professional knowledge for future application.

The investigation of student teachers' attitudes toward their experiences during the student/practice teaching period offers insight

into a variety of concerns; attitudes; values; cognitions about practice, and about discipline, as well as perceptions about self and abilities. The variables that influence these qualities and concerns are numerous and sometimes subtle and difficult to identify. One approach to identification of the subtle influences upon students' apprehension of role, job, conduct, and relationships is the use of journals and the encouragement of the application of both reflective thinking and qualitative research techniques to the events of the student teaching experience.

Journals and Reflective Thinking

Sparks-Langer, Simmons, Pash, Colton and Starko (1990) presented their findings concerning preservice teachers reflective thinking after having been engaged with a pre-student teaching program designed to promote reflection on curriculum, methods, and sociopolitical issues. One area of interest to the researchers was reflective thinking about the pedagogical principles underlying teaching decisions. The researchers developed characteristics of reflective pedagogical thinking over a three-year study at Eastern Michigan University. They used Van Manen's (1977) stages of reflective thinking: technical reflection, practical reflection, and critical reflection. These stages provide insight

into reaching unexamined goals, the means and the end (goal), and the issues of morality and justice. The structured field experiences offered to these students were designed to provide connections between classroom theories and concepts and their practical application in order to provide a rich network of meaning from which students could draw inferences and make conclusions. Another referent for the research was Kolb (1984) and Schon's (1983, 1987) views on reflective thinking practitioners. Kolb's cyclic relationship reflected the higher stages of Bloom's taxonomy: problem framing, factor naming, then interpretation, followed by synthesis, analysis and evaluation. This system was used to guide students toward development of a meaningful schemata. The researchers developed the Framework for Reflective Pedagogical Thinking to measure semantic descriptions given by students in interviews or in journals. The journal data did not provide a satisfactory analysis because the format did not follow the levels of reflection in the Framework. The Framework provides the following levels for examination:

Level	Description
1	No descriptive language

2	Simple, lay person description
3	Events labeled with appropriate terms
4	Explanation with tradition or personal preference given as the rationale
5	Explanation with principle or theory given as the rationale
6	Explanation with principle/theory and consideration of context factors
7	Explanation with consideration of ethical, moral, political issues (Sparks-Langer and Others, p. 27).

The authors of the article used this Framework in several studies. The Framework offers a way to explore students' use of courses and their application in the classroom, to explore programmatic changes to promote students' reflective pedagogical practices, and to promote reflective thinking on the part of cooperating teachers who will supervise student teachers in the future. Future examination of student teachers' journals might utilize the Framework or a similar evaluation that is perhaps less linear.

Reflective thinking research is difficult to quantify. Most research which employs journals is unashamedly qualitative in nature. Qualitative research furnishes opportunity to examine materials in the affective domain. Recently, interest in the examination of journals or field logs has increased. A number of studies have been published concerning this type of research. Maxie (1989) investigated student teachers' needs and concerns in a qualitative design which furnished the basis for data gathering along with interviews and classroom observations. She found that students believed that their experiences in real classrooms during student teaching were invaluable. Maxie (1989) found that student teachers improved in problem solving skills and methods to resolve concerns.

Williams (1991) reported on a study which examined the efficacy of student teachers trained in the naturalistic inquiry method. He found that this approach provided a wealth of information to use in judging the quality of student teachers. Nine student teachers were taught naturalistic inquiry methods by Williams while being taught how to teach by two teachers in the school. The author of this study employed the following qualitative methods: negative case analysis, member checking,

peer debriefing, triangulation, persistent observation, maintenance of an audit trail and prolonged engagement. One conclusion from the study was that students felt excitement coupled with confusion about what they were to do. They were concerned about working with cooperating teachers and conducting research at the same time. A second conclusion drawn from journals and field notes after two months was that students developed more sophisticated observational and descriptive techniques as they practice taught. The quality of inquiry improved. Another conclusion was that using synthesis writing helped the student teachers make sense out of their experiences. The cooperating teachers also became supportive of the use of research in the classroom as a means to improve their own teaching. According to Williams (1991) the results of this study provided three important implications:

1. "Naturalistic inquiry can be a part of the teacher education process and can powerfully influence what preparing teachers see, hear, think, learn, and do as teachers. This should improve their performance.

2. Cooperating teaches can see the benefits of naturalistic inquiry to their own students and themselves and may do more naturalistic inquiry themselves so they are involved in ongoing research

into learning and teaching and can contribute to the literature and be more interested in what others are finding, leading to a better integration of theory and practice.

3. This approach to supervision of student teachers is innovative and gives the university a valuable way to participate in preparing teachers that also benefits the faculty members who can keep learning and doing research and publishing while meeting their teaching responsibilities (p. 10)."

Zacharias (1990) reviewed the relationship between journal writing and thinking processes in a survey of literature. What she located was authoritative statements from writers and teachers but no actual research was found. It was suspected that the word actual implied that Zacharias found no quantitative data. Most of what Zacharias reported was specifically designed to define journal writing and to tie journal writing to the thinking processes of students in K-12. None of the literature addressed the use of student teaching journals; however, the thorough analysis and definition of writing provided useful statements about the use of writing as a tool for thinking.

Thomas (1991) described a study conducted in the United

Kingdom. He indicated "that preservice teachers need an exposure to dialogical-reflective practice so that, in Brunerian terms, there can be a better match between the systems in the training environment which support learning and the processes by which the learners are acquiring of their knowledge (p. 6)." Thomas (1991) stated, "Part of the exposure to reflective practice is the generation of personal-professional narratives and the keeping of journals and logs (p. 6)." One of the benefits of focused journals is that of concrete discourse. Thomas said, "Events, relationships and practice are described in particular discrete contexts: honoring spontaneity, specificity and ambiguity. The events described, the stories told, the linking of cause and effect, the attempts to uncover previously unexamined assumptions, involves the integration of knowledge and feelings, experience, reflection and analysis (p. 9)." Thomas recommended a place and a time in the program for training teachers which would allow reflective practice.

Bolin (1990) examined the student teaching experience of one student in a case study. The student became more focused on himself and less involved with reflective thinking as he progressed. O'Laughlin (1991) studied nine students journals, then interviewed the students to

reinforce his conclusions that

> Student teachers struggle with their own histories and autobiographies; they struggle with the ideal conceptions of pedagogy presented in their courses; they struggle either to adapt to or resist the powerful socialization pressures that are intrinsic to their relationships with cooperating teachers; they struggle with transformation in an educational system locked into reproduction; and most of all they struggle to reconstruct their own autobiographical and professional identities under all these competing pressures and expectations (p. 42).

Holmes (1990) conducted a four-year study of the preservice lives of four elementary teachers. He used six categories to investigate their journals for concerns: "(a) self-assessment, (b) view of work, (c) practical skills, (d) attitude, (e) personal relations, and (f) commitment to teaching (p. 2)." Holmes (1990) used these categories to construct a global picture of these students' attitudes. Taylor and others (1990) examined student teachers' conceptions about lessons with journals kept by elementary (18), secondary (7), and special education (6) majors. By the end of their training, classroom management concerns were reduced.

Nicassio (1991) identified several structured journal entry types that might be utilized in future student teaching studies. His reflections and explorations type helped to develop understandings concerning the implications of experience.

The research concerning qualitative studies of reflective thinking incorporated into student teachers' journals provided a rationale for a study of a similar nature. The value of having data which provides insight into the thinking processes involved in putting theoretical principles into practice is of undeniable importance in determining what student teachers will have to offer in their future positions as in-service teachers. The more information available, the more complete the picture we have of what student teachers really are. As we define and refine reflective techniques for future classes, it will be possible to consider evaluations of the affective areas never considered in the quantitative studies of the past.

Instrumentation/Data Collection

The quantitative instrumentation was the lists of connotative terms generated by faculty/college supervisors and former student teachers. The journals were the actual instruments used for data collection. There

was a wide variety of journal approaches found in the sample. No specific requirements were set on the length of any journal writing; however, students were asked to write every day when they were in the classroom.

The qualitative aspect of data collection was the search for evidence of reflective thinking in four areas: relationship with classroom teacher, discipline, personal teaching skills and abilities, and students. During their Professional Seminar students were given assignments to keep reflective journals. They were asked to think about the lessons they taught and their successes and failures at implementing them. They were also asked to reflect on their relationship with their cooperating teachers during their time in the classrooms. Two categories that were chosen appeared to be related, students and discipline; however, discipline was related to classroom/school rules and procedures; whereas students were to be viewed as individuals and as the subject of understanding and empathy.

The journals were read by two researchers to provide peer checking. A response to each journal was kept in each researcher's independent field log. Expressions or passages which represented the

categories identified as pertinent to reflective thinking were coded and examined. Because this study did not permit actual field observations, the researchers were limited to the context of the journals alone, rather than the context of the entire situation. However limited the journal data may or may not be, it still provided a record of what was done, seen, and heard. The ideal situation would be videotaping at specified intervals and making an analysis of the most accurate form of observation.

Sample

Thirty-four students completed their practice teaching during the Spring, 1992 semester at MSU-Meridian. Thirty-one journals were completed satisfactorily for semantic analysis. Thirty journals were included in the reflective thinking analysis. There were 2 males and 32 females in the original group; there were 31 elementary (K-6) and 3 secondary (7-12) student teachers. The sample was predominantly white. Placement in schools involved student teachers working in more than five counties. Cooperating teachers (3) and college supervisors (8) completed a triad for the student teaching experience.

Procedure and Analysis of Data

Data were collected by the Chairman of the Division of Education

at Mississippi State University-Meridian Campus. Journals were turned in during the final meeting of the Professional Seminar which accompanies the student teaching semester.

The journals were kept over a 12 week period beginning with an observational week in the cooperating teachers' classrooms, continuing with the weeks of practice teaching, and ending with the week when student teachers began to submit their job applications. The original reading of the journals was used to determine whether the students had positive, neutral, or negative experiences during this time period. Twenty-six journals were rated as positive, according to the list of positive terms (See Appendix A); 5 were neutral, and 1 journal was classed as negative. Since 26 of the 31 journals were positive, it was possible to rate the teaching experiences successful. Students began with a positive attitude and remained positive throughout. Of the neutral journals, positive responses nearly equaled or barely exceeded negative responses. The one negative journal reflected a disparate amount of negative comments on the part of the student teacher in his/her journal. The source of most of this student's concerns centered around the relationship with the cooperating teacher and her unwillingness to help or

to share any of her classroom expertise with the student teacher. Several of the journals which were designated positive contained negative comments, but these were very minor among this group. Most of the students complained about discipline problems, students' lack of interest and motivation, doubts about self and abilities. However, most of these comments were canceled by positive statement in the next line. The positive comments indicated that these students felt good about themselves and what they were doing in the classroom. Most of the student teachers praised their cooperating teachers and reported learning a great deal about classroom management, teaching methods, and planning from them. The journals indicated that most of the student teachers did not realize what physical and emotional resources were required to teach on a daily basis. A few complained about catching every cold or other virus that went around. Many of the things that struck the student teachers' as strange were merely normal children's behavior at that grade level. Most student teachers reported feeling extremely tired on Friday. Almost all of the student teachers commented on the feeling of "rightness" about their choice of a profession. Not one of the student teachers indicated that he/she would not like to teach; all

were eager for their own students, their own classrooms, and their own jobs. Jobs were a source of worry for everyone because of the cuts in educational positions in the area around MSU-Meridian.

Reading 31 journals and keeping a field log of comments related to the 4 areas of concern was the second portion of this study. The journals provided insight into a diversity of school districts, teaching practices, and classroom management techniques. Individual student teachers encountered a wide variety of students, student problems, and student behaviors. The geographical area represented by the assignments covered a wide radius around MSU-Meridian. There were a cooperating teacher and a principal from the assigned school to train and to assist each student teacher. There were also 8 university supervisors who visited the students regularly to assist them in preparing lessons and completing the Mississippi Teacher Assessment Instrument (MTAI); all students were required to make a specific score on each of the competencies and indicators in order to pass their practice teaching requirement successfully. None of the students failed their assessment.

Insights into the experiences of student teachers provided a basis for program evaluation and for the evaluation of students' successes and

failures. After reading the journals, 4 categories of concerns were observed and then marked for consideration. These four categories were: relationship with cooperating teachers, discipline, personal teaching skills and abilities, and students. For each category, the student was to demonstrate reflective thinking. Reflective thinking was utilized to connect classroom theories and instruction in the student teachers' educational program and the application of these to the classroom situation. Students were expected to question their own performance as practice teachers and their feelings about justice and morality in terms of their students and their methods of discipline. Finally, they were to examine curriculum, methods, sociopolitical issues, and the pedagogical principles underlying teaching decisions.

Most of the students were not able to demonstrate reflective thinking. They appeared to expect it of their students but did not demonstrate it in the entries in their journals on a regular basis. Most of the students were too involved in the daily grind of teaching, grading papers, preparing lessons and plans, and classroom management to reflect on the "why's" of their decisions. On the basis of the 4 categories of reflection established for the journals, there were 5 journals which met

the criteria. Twenty-six of the 31 journals had little or no reflective thinking and thus were not suitable for discussion. Student A was a female who was assigned to a kindergarten class. She found the children to be very different from her expectations and evidenced concern for their correct placement in the learning centers which the cooperating teacher used. This student teacher questioned the way that decisions about placement are made in general, not just in her specific classroom. The student teacher found the cooperating teacher to be expert at dealing with children's behavior. In the course of observing the cooperating teacher, Student A identified a number of characteristics of kindergarten children and began building a good relationship with the children. Student A found that scheduling in kindergarten was a problem for her because she was more used to a structured environment with specified time intervals for certain classes. One of the most frightening events in this student teacher's experience was dealing with a child who came to her with a problem of a sensitive nature. Student A suspected child abuse and referred the problem to her cooperating teacher; the problem turned out to be a kidney infection, and the student teacher was much relieved. After this incident, Student A reflected on the necessity of

reporting cases of suspected child abuse, but also on the necessity of being sure of facts and not basing a decision to report on conjecture. Student A learned a great deal about the qualities of a kindergarten teacher from observations of how her cooperating teacher dealt with teaching and with problem children. Some of the things that caused reflection with regard to students included: overly affectionate children, out of control behavior, defiance, overt expressions of socially unacceptable ideas in show and tell, and stealing. The student teacher discovered that two of the kindergarten children lacked the appropriate social skills, a common problem with this age group. One of Student A's goals for her teaching was to help these children gain appropriate self-confidence. Student A was not concerned with or did not demonstrate any evidence of concern over her personal teaching skills and abilities; she also did not mention her personal reactions to discipline, other than to comment on the appropriate behavior of the cooperating teacher. Lack of reflection in these areas indicated that Student A will have to develop such types of reflection for future use in her own classroom in order to be successful. Despite lack of evidence of reflective thinking in two of the four categories, this student did

demonstrate the habit of thinking about events and circumstances of events. Her ability to make rational pedagogical decisions and to deal with moral and ethical issues was integrated successfully into her schemata. In agreement with Maxie (1989) this student felt that her experiences in the classroom were invaluable.

Student B was a female who was assigned to practice teach in a first grade classroom in a rural setting. Her journal opened with an analysis of classroom management style without a teaching assistant to help out. The cooperating teacher was doing an enormous amount of work and there were children who needed to work in the centers but did not have opportunities to do so because they never got finished with their seatwork. The cooperating teacher was helpful with the student teacher's observation and with MTAI; the student teacher specified that she was learning from the cooperating teacher's methods of instruction and discipline. The student teacher also noticed the learning styles of the students. Also, this student recognized that some of her students come from broken homes and other environmentally uncertain situations. Every time that Student B taught a lesson, she reflected on ways that she could improve future lessons. She also recognized the

meaningfulness of teaching in lower grades at first to gain insight into what is expected of older students. She noted that one of the reading groups had a very limited attention span and considered ways of optimizing learning for this group; however, she also stated that she knew that teachers never reach 100 percent of the children in a class. As far as discipline was concerned, Student B was able to gain control of the classroom and found that talking was the major problem with first graders. However, when she reflected on the type of control being maintained, she felt that she might be too hard or expect too much of younger students. On one occasion this student teacher was absent because her own child was ill; she felt guilty that she was not at school. With regard to personal teaching skills, she continued to question each lesson but was excited about being in charge for herself. She felt that she had learned more from practice teaching than she could have learned under other circumstances, especially since there are so many real world things that textbooks and classes do not teach. She had more reflection in all four categories than did Student A. She also integrated her reflective thinking throughout her journal. This student will probably carry the habit of questioning her teaching methods, discipline,

relationships with others in her school, her student relationships and responsibilities when she is actively teaching. A desirable outcome of this successful experiment with reflective journaling and the insights gained through keeping her journal would be her development into a more reflective teacher.

Student C was a female assigned to a school in a more rural setting. She recorded several episodes of reflection which indicated that moral and ethical questions about students, discipline, and relationships with others were a part of her thinking. She opened her journal with reflection about the changes she expected to see in herself when she had completed this phase of her teacher training. She indicated a desire to become more mature, confident and professional as she learned the skills and applied her abilities to teaching. Almost from the first Student C developed a meaningful relationship with some of her students; her concern for students who were absent and therefore behind in their work was evident in the way she wrote about several specific students. This student teacher was very upset over the lack of professionalism shown to her and to the school's rules by her university supervisor on one occasion. She felt that the university supervisor had violated the ethical

considerations he had taught at the beginning of the Professional Seminar. Another episode of reflective thinking occurred when Student C dealt with a student who simply looked for the easy way out of every assignment despite being very capable. With regard to her personal teaching skills and abilities, Student C learned that she needed to involve her students more in her lessons if they were to really learn the material that she was teaching. Another insight was that too many activities tend to make students "go crazy." Student C preferred writing assignments for the particular group because this helped to soothe them and provide learning opportunities at the same time. When her lessons were successful, Student C stated that she could see the students learning and understanding. Student C knew that she was going to learn something new every day that she practice taught and she put this positive attitude in focus on all of the categories of reflective thinking. On one good day, Student C felt that she had done more teaching that day than she had done in all of the classes before. She spoke highly of her cooperating teacher because the cooperating teacher made learning fun and exciting for the children. This reflection indicated insight into the purposes of teaching and activities which promote motivation and

learning. The one moral issue which Student C questioned about her cooperating teacher was that of retesting a student who did not try his best and giving him a higher grade. The student teacher felt that this was not a good practice and was unfair to other children who were not given this opportunity. Some of Student C's reflection was about her personal feelings of inadequacy and bad attitude at one point in the student teaching semester. By the latter part of the semester, the cooperating teacher was heavily involved in preparing her students for standardized tests which left the student teacher at loose ends. At the end of the student teaching, Student C was hired as an Assistant Teacher in the school district where she practice taught. With regard to reflection, Student C showed less reflective thinking about her students and their discipline. She felt that students showed her proper respect and therefore had few problems with them. Student C was able to recognize the need to reflect about her attitude and her approaches to solving problems, a desirable trait for future involvement in her professional teaching career.

Student D was a female who was assigned to a city school, practice teaching in a first grade classroom. She developed a good

relationship with her cooperating teacher and expected to learn from her classroom experiences. Early in the week of observation, Student D learned that two of the children in this classroom had been abused and removed from their parents' care by Social Services. The two had been placed with their grandmother. She reflected on the difficulty of dealing with her first real experience with child abuse and how she was going to handle them and herself when teaching them. Student D also recognized that her cooperating teacher was really an expert at handling first graders; the student teacher hoped to be able to do this and be effective in her own classroom without demeaning her students. A great shock to Student D was the fact that some first graders got suspended from school. According to Student D's journal, when she was in school, she did not even dream of doing something like that. This incident caused much of Student D's reflection about the changes in students over the past few years. Another unusual incident prompted Student D to reflect about students; one student whom she had observed do something wrong said that he did not do it. Student D reflected on why students believe that they can deny something that has been observed visually by the teacher. Student D found her students to be responsive

and attentive, but she did not reflect on what efforts had gone into reaching this point in the classroom before she arrived to practice teach. One of the first things that came out of reflective thinking about students was the need to let first graders talk some of the time. The cooperating teacher was a source of reflection with regard to effective discipline techniques to be learned. The cooperating teacher also gave extra effort after school to help Student D be prepared for her evaluation, making appropriate suggestions about her instructional duty and giving support and encouragement often. Student D felt well-prepared for her evaluation and was successful; much of her success she attributed to having a good cooperating teacher. After her lesson for evaluation, she reflected about the importance of never taking understanding for granted. She felt that students' understanding must be ensured for all lesson in the future. Another problem with discipline that bothered the student teacher occurred with the children in their music class with a teacher who did not take his/her instruction seriously and therefore the children behaved in an awful manner. A problem with a student bothered Student D. One child's mother came for a conference and was shown his journal; the mother took the journal and had the student correct all of his

inventive spellings because she was not pleased with him being able to write "just any way." After the mother left the classroom, the journal writing period was not productive for this student; he only journaled one line. The student teacher felt that the cooperating teacher should have prevented the child from being hurt by his mother's misunderstanding and lack of support for him. This incident was a great disappointment to the student teacher who felt that the incident was handled in a very poor manner for all involved despite the fact that the cooperating teacher did try to explain about writing in journals. This student did not really reflect on specific incidents of teaching methods or on her skills and abilities; however, her interest in students and their welfare, learning, and growth were evidence of preparation and readiness to deal with her classes in the future.

Student E was a female who was highly reflective during her entire practice teaching experience. Student E was particularly reflective about her teaching skills and abilities. When she first taught a story, she made the mistake of teaching over the students' heads. Her reflection involved the realization that she should have told the story in much simpler terms which would be appropriate for the level of the learners. Also, she felt

that she should have given more examples of the qualities that she wanted the students to recognize as making someone special. After a time, Student E reflected that she had learned a lot and had come to the decision that she did not need to be exactly like her cooperating teacher in order to be successful. She felt that her way of teaching could be used successfully, as well. Adjustments of teaching came after reflection for this student teacher. She realized that her expectations were too high with regard to classroom discipline; she believed that she should learn to ignore some of the mildly discrepant behavior rather than trying to cover ever little detail. This student teacher became involved in faculty activities to some degree as a way of gaining relationships with co-workers outside of the classroom and of expanding her personal skills. After some opportunities to teach, the student teacher gained insight into which activities really worked with the children and what was impossible to accomplish. She also developed skills in recognizing the sensitivity of children and learned to tone down her strident voice and make it more gentle. With regard to students, Student E reflected about parents who fail to see that their children are present in school; absent students cannot learn and cannot keep up. One mother regularly permitted her

child to miss school or simply failed to bring him. Because this child was bright and could learn, Student E regretted that parental involvement was absent. Reflection about teaching brought the realization that all lessons must be planned and prepared and that good organizational skills are essential to successful teaching. A funny and realistic comment was made by Student E after she had yelled "Hush!" at her students; she said that teachers sometimes need to go to time out, too! Underlying all of the teaching experiences was the knowledge that these were not her students and that she was not teaching in her own classroom. This student teacher did a good job of connecting her education courses with real teaching. She was developing an understanding of self and children and she was able to focus beyond the daily routine of the classroom.

These 5 students were on the verge of real breakthroughs in their thinking about their professional responsibilities and their successes and failures. The value of this journal study is its insight into the minds of preservice teachers who have learned to integrate and to apply a large body of knowledge into their personal schematas. Keeping a journal is one of the most thorough ways of recording the experiences that come so quickly in practice teaching. It also provides opportunities to assess

and to evaluate that are frequently overlooked when no journal is kept.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions about student teachers in general cannot be drawn from a study which examines specific student teachers experiences; however, it should be possible to develop categories of concerns that will function in a generic way to measure reflective thinking. The categories for this study could furnish a basis for future reflective thinking instruction in the curriculum of the teacher education program. With reflective teaching becoming more important and receiving more emphasis, this quality must be fostered in our future teachers. Children, their discipline, and their instruction benefit from reflections about teaching practices: methods, decisions, and implementations. Teachers who consider themselves and their professionalism from a moral/ethical viewpoint are role models in a world that has been dominated by television and violence for many years. Teachers who reflect on the best way of achieving a goal or objective will be better teachers. Those who involve themselves in knowing their students and their needs will be better able to meet those needs. Practice of effective discipline techniques which are carefully considered and applied to the specific classroom population

must function more effectively than arbitrary and malicious rules. It is obvious that our educational system functions better when teachers think about teaching on the more advanced levels of cognition. Teachers also need to go beyond recall, knowledge, and application; what is needed to help students is teachers thinking at the levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

This study only opened the door to exploration of the insights of student teachers. Future studies will incorporate other categories for examination; one of these categories will certainly be commitment to teaching. Another aspect of future studies will be the attempt to help students develop more sophisticated observational skills. In the Spring Semester, 1993, the researchers hope to enlist a limited number of student teachers who will be trained in reflective thinking and be made aware of the nature of qualitative research before they enter the practice teaching classrooms. The planned study will incorporate interviews with the student teacher volunteers, classroom visits, and videotapes of various activities being taught for analysis.

Appendix

Key Words and/or Descriptors for Analysis of MSU-Meridian Student Teaching Journals - Faculty Generated

Positive Terms:	Negative Terms:
stimulating	anxious
useful	afraid
practical	scared
exciting	apprehensive
helpful	useless
encouraging	waste of time
inspired	distressed
confident	uneasy
assured	nervous
pleased	impatient
rewarding	fatigued (tired)
at ease	lost
good day (great day)	inexperienced

Note: Nouns, verbs, and or phrases are included

Key Words and/or Descriptors for Analysis of MSU-Meridian Student Teaching Journals - Student Generated

Positive Terms:	Negative Terms:
smiling face	frowning face
O.K. day	terrible
did very well	not the best day
feeling more comfortable	failed miserably
enjoyed teaching	Ugh!!
sigh of relief	Who wouldn't worry about MTAI?
good week	TGIF
on cloud nine	really an eye-opener
feel like a real teacher	What a bummer!
smooth	managed to survive
comfortable	really wound up
so far so good	problems already
fell in love with kids	guess I'm on my own
	wild day
	weird

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